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**New Hampshire**  
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**New England Fresh-cut Apple Slices  
Show Great Promise for Local Markets**

By

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A new regional apple product shows tremendous potential as an alternative market for New England apples. The product is packaged, fresh-cut, sliced apples and the industry is heralding it as the “new” baby cut carrot, hoping that it will mimic the cut carrot’s success among consumers.

Known as “Grab Apples”, the sliced apple product has had initial success in regional schools, where kids and food service directors alike, love them. It seems there is less waste with the packaged slices than when kids are provided a whole apple. Also, younger kids with missing teeth can eat the slices more easily. The packages are 2 oz. in size and equal to approximately half an apple in quantity. Varieties that have been used successfully include Gala and Empire.

The New England Grab Apple product was developed as a result of a study recently completed by the New England Departments of Agriculture. The study was undertaken to look at an alternative market for New England apples. The current apple market is characterized by declining returns in the wholesale market for New England apple growers due to consolidation in the food industry and from competition from western and global apple sources. As the wholesale price drops, growers find it increasingly difficult to make ends meet, forcing more and more orchards out of business, New England-wide.

The fresh-cut produce industry has experienced phenomenal growth in recent years, as advances in processing technology and changes in the marketplace have coincided. Industry surveys show convenience as the major driver for growth of this category.

The purpose of this study was to provide growers, grower cooperatives, apple marketing organizations and other interested parties with the information needed to 1) determine the feasibility of procuring, processing, distributing and marketing apple slices in New England, 2) develop the marketing basis for a consumer test of the product; and 3) support operational business planning.

The Grab Apples product was developed as a prototype for consumer testing within this study and was very well received in several venues. When the project concluded there was independent business interest in producing and marketing the product. Since January 1, 2006 New England Grab Apples have been purchased by a number of school districts throughout New England.

Grab Apples also have potential as a snack package available in retail outlets and vending machines. The product must be refrigerated and is treated with a natural material containing vitamin C and calcium to prevent browning. It has a three week shelf life under proper refrigeration.

Supporters hope that the recent success of sliced apple products introduced by McDonald’s restaurants (Apple Dippers and fruit and walnut salads, using more than 100 million pounds of fresh apples per year, nationwide) indicates that consumers of all ages are looking for healthy snack alternatives. The New England study showed loyalty to New England brands where nearly 75% of those asked said they would buy the New England Grab Apples over other similar products.

To see the full report of the New England Sliced Apple Study, visit [www.agriculture.nh.gov](http://www.agriculture.nh.gov) and click on publications.

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